Our Boys and Girls

THE GIRL WHO CONQUERED HERSELF.

Ruth always had an ungovernable temper. I have known Ruth a long while—we played dolls together, and made mud pies and divided our candy, and so I really know. I am perhaps her very first friend. Of course her real name is not Ruth, but I am rather sure that it would be unfair to tell her real name.

My first memory of Ruth's temper is a bit dim, for we might have been five years old, we two, at the time. I remember that I owned a black-faced, wooly-headed doll, and I remember that she wanted it for her own. Because I was not the giving-up kind—primarily, however, because I loved the doll—I refused to give it up, whereupon Ruth threw a stone at me. It was a large, sharp stone, and it made an ugly-looking, jagged little cut on my forehead. I remember how the blood dripped down the side of my face.

Ruth was aghast at the mischief she had done. I can see her now, her chubby baby hands clasped in front of her eyes to shut out the sight of the blood. At my wails some one came to me and washed my face, and put sticking-plaster on my forehead. I was kissed and petted and given a peppermint stick. But, most of all (and this memory is a very real one), I can see Ruth's small, stricken face, and I can hear her voice saying:

"I didn't mean to! I didn't mean to hurt her! The stone frew itself!"

My forehead was nearly well the next day. In a week the scar of it was quite gone. But it was a long time before the scared look was entirely driven from Ruth's eyes.

We went right on being friends. A hastily flung rock or a cut forehead is a small thing to a really true child-friendship. But, though we continued to be friends, we saw less and less of each other as the years went on. We were well past the doll and mud-pie stage, and we were living in different towns and going to different schools and having different interests in life, and different friends. But occasionally we visited. It was on one of my visits to her home that I again saw her lose her temper. It was when her small brother spilled a cup of chocolate on her new dress. I'll admit that she had provocation, for it was a wonderful dress; but little brother hadn't meant to spill the chocolate.

Ruth was a pretty girl. She is still a pretty girl, for she has a great mass of corn-colored hair and the bluest eyes I ever saw. She had a mouth that looked like the first rosebud of June. But, though Ruth is a pretty girl, I was glad I was not her little brother that day when he spilled the chocolate on her gown. Her blue eyes grew as hard and as cold as ice—as ice with some dark fire glowing behind it—and her rosebud mouth straightened out until it looked like a thin crimson gash on her face. I saw her hand clutch convulsively on the air, and then all at once the little brother gave a queer gasp and ran out of the room. I didn't blame him at all, for, strangely, at that moment I remembered an angry baby face and a wildly flung stone. And across the years that divided my little childhood from my big girlhood, the hurt of my cut forehead came back to me.

And then, in a moment, Ruth's clutched hand unfolded, and her lips parted in a cold smile that was almost a sneer. "The dress will wash," I ventured, half frightened.

"Yes," said Ruth. And then suddenly she picked up a cup—an empty chocolate-cup of very fine china—and threw it down—hard—on the floor. I watched, dazedly, as it shattered into a hundred bits. And then Ruth burst into sobs, and ran from the room. Upstairs I could hear her bedroom door slam and the lock snap quickly.

I stood alone in the room, looking at the fragments of the cup, lying about on the floor, and as I stood there her little brother came strolling back.

"Did Ruth—throw that?" he questioned, pointing to the pieces. And then, before I could answer, he grinned, in an apologetic, small-boy way.

"Ruth's a dandy girl, usually," he told me. "She's an awful nice girl. But when anything makes her mad—whew! She's just awful. She screams an' cries, an' throws things. An' she doesn't care who she hits. She's always sorry—after—but she can't seem to help actin' like she does!"

Ruth was upstairs the rest of the day with a bad headache. The next day she was down early, singing as she dusted the rooms.

We grew up even more, from the big-girl stage to young ladies with their hair up. We had left school. I was launched in the business world, doing the work I love to do, when Ruth announced her engagement. Her fiance was a western man, and she had not known him for a very long time. She had never met any of his relatives; but she wrote me that his father, who was a famous surgeon, was going to spend a week in the city, and that she was going to give a dinner for him.

"I'll be coming into town the day of the dinner," she wrote, "and if you'll meet me in the station we'll go up together. I want to get there before Bob's father comes. I want him to see me looking my best."

And I said I would come to the dinner and meet her wherever she wanted me to.

I went to the station, and though it was not long before train-time, Ruth was nowhere to be seen. I waited nervously, for I remembered that she wanted to get home early—that she wanted "Bob's father to see her at her best." And then at last, just as the iron gates had slammed shut—just as the whistle of the train had tooted for the last time, Ruth dashed into the station, her face scarlet from running, her hat on one side.

"The train is ready to go," I told her; "they've shut us out."

The station was full of people, but Ruth didn't care. She turned to the guard who had shut the gate: "Let me through," she beseeched him; "it's important that I get this train. I must get it."

But the guard stood firm. "Sorry, lady," he told her, "but it's against the rules."

And then Ruth lost her temper, as I had seen her lose it when she hit me with a stone and when her brother had spilled the chocolate. The flush faded out of her face, leaving it pale and sharp and worn.

"I hate you!" she said to the guard. "I hate you! You might have let me through. I hate you!" Her foot stamped on the ground, and with all her might she threw a paper package across the station. It struck a courtly old gentleman, and, bursting, fell at his feet. Pink rose petals littered the floor. . .

We were the center of a grinning crowd. I shrank back against a post and watched as the old gentleman picked up the roses and carried them to her.

"Young lady," he said, "I don't know who you are or what you are, but I want to tell you one thing. You've got to control that temper of yours, for it's hurting no one but yourself. It didn't hurt me when the package hit me. It only disgusted me. But it really did hurt you. If you keep on letting go of yourself, you'll land in an insane asylum. I know. And no one will be sorry to have you go there. For people with a temper like yours are a menace to any community."

Ruth stood pale and aghast. No one had ever talked to her that way. And the crowd, ever shifting, drifted away from where she stood. And just as the old man was going to speak again a young man, handsome, broad-shouldered, athletic, came up from behind and gripped his shoulder.

"Why, dad," cried the young man, gladly, "how did you happen to find Ruth?"

And though I had never met him, I knew that it was Bob.

Late that night, after the guests had all retired, I went into Ruth's room. She was lying on her bed, sobbing, but she sat up at the sound of my step.

"I will never," she told me distinctly, "lose my temper again. And I will tell Bob everything tomorrow. Perhaps"—her voice broke—"perhaps he won't want to marry a girl who might end up in an insane asylum. But, no matter what happens, I will never lose my temper again."

And she never did. For Ruth made good—just as other girls make good with difficult problems. She told me that it was hard, desperately hard, at times. Sometimes she'd have to go up to her room and lock her door and bite her bedpost. Sometimes she would fall on her knees and ask God for help. But, no matter how much she wanted to give way—and I've seen her in some exasperating situations—she'd turn her back and hum a tune before she spoke. She told me that while she was humming she'd say "insane asylum" and "menace" over and over in her mind. And finally she won out, for by controlling her temper she found that she had fewer occasions to lose it.

I was visiting Ruth the other day in her new home. Her father-in-law, who loves her very much, lives with them. She does her own work, and after supper I went out into the kitchen and helped her wash the dishes. Bob dried them, and, man-like, he got interested in the conversation as he was drying Ruth's handsomest cut-glass, silver-mounted pitcher, and dropped it. It was one of her wedding presents, and I started back in very real fear before the expected storm. But the storm did not break.

"I'm sorry, dear," said Bob, humbly. "I'm awfully sorry." But Ruth cut him short.

"Dont' you care," she told him, soothingly. "We may get another some day, dear."—Margaret Sangster, in Christian Herald.

RALPH'S SECOND TALK WITH HIS MOTHER.

By Grandmother.

"Mother, that stranger brought another objection to the Bible. That was the miraculous birth of Jesus. He said it was an impossibility; he did not believe in miracles; they were contrary to nature and so could not be true. He believed that Jesus lived and was a holy man, just as there had been holy men in many ages of the world and that he did much good by his holy example."

Mother said: "I will begin with a positive